

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY MEXICO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 7241

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, CI, SP, SHUN
SUBJ: SPANISH SOCIALIST VISITS CHILE ON BEHALF OF POLITICAL
PRISONERS

REF: MADRID 6167

1. SUMMARY: THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SPANISH SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY (PSOE), FELIPE GONZALEZ, VISITED SANTIAGO AUGUST 28-31 OSTENSIBLY ONLY ON BEHALF OF CHILEAN PRISONERS, ERICH SCHNAKE AND CARLOS LAZO, AND NOT AS A POLITICIAN. BUT THE GOC GAVE HIM FREE REIN TO TALK WITH LOCAL OPPOSITION FIGURES (HE AVAILED HIMSELF OF THE CHANCE) AND HAD HIS TRIP PLAYED UP AS AN EXAMPLE OF CHILE'S OPENNESS. GONZALEZ DID HIS BEST TO DUCK PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE CHILEAN SCENE BUT LEFT THE IMPRESSION THAT IT WAS NOT AS BAD AS REPORTED ABROAD. END SUMMARY.

2. GONZALEZ VISITED SCHNAKE AND LAZO IN THEIR JAIL CELLS, MADE CALLS ON THE JUSTICE MINISTER MONICA MADARIAGA, SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT, JOSE EYZAGUIRRE AND THE HEAD
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OF THE COMMISSION RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEWING SUPREME DECREE TPR COMMUTATIONS--THAT WOULD ALLOW SCHANKE AND LAZO TO GO INTO EXILE.

3. ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN ON HIS RECENT VISIT ALSO RAISED WITH MADARIAGA THE QUESTION OF DECREE 504 RELEASES FOR SCHNAKE AND LAZO. AT THAT TIME SHE GAVE AS HER "PERSONAL

OPINION" THAT THESE TWO MEN, BECAUSE OF THEIR POLITICAL IMPORTANCE, SHOULD BE EXCHANGED FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS ELSEWHERE.

4. APART FROM HIS OFFICIAL CALLS, GONZALEZ MET WITH CARDINAL RAUL SILVA, OFFICIALS OF CATHOLIC CHURCH'S HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP, MEMBERS OF FAMILIES OF SOME DISAPPEARED PERSONS AND WITH LEADERS OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC AND SMALL SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES. IN PRESS INTERVIEWS HE CAREFULLY AVOIDED ANY POLITICAL STATEMENTS. HE DID NOTE, HOWEVER, IN DEPARTING SANTIAGO, THAT HE HAD HAD COMPLETE LIBERTY TO MEET AND TALK WITH WHOM HE WISHED, AND ADDED THAT IT WAS ALWAYS HARD TO GET A CLEAR PICTURE OF A COUNTRY FROM AFAR.

5. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THE GOC IS MOVING TOWARD THE RELEASES OF SCHNAKE AND LAZO, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD FIND IT MORE PALATABLE IF AN EXCHANGE FOR COMMUNIST HELD POLITICAL PRISONERS COULD BE WORKED OUT.

6. THE GOC MADE ITS POINT THAT EVEN STAUNCH OPPONENTS COULD MOVE FREELY IN CHILE. GONZALEZ, BY "PLAYING BY THE RULES", MADE IT EASIER FOR MORE FLEXIBLE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE CONSERVATIVE GOC TO RISK FURTHER VISITS BY CRITICS.

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